



Planning Commission

Missing Middle Housing Analysis - Deliberations

Agenda Date: 4/2/2018
Agenda Item Number:
File Number: 18-0323

Type: discussion **Version:** 1 **Status:** Filed

Title

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Recommended Action

Discuss public comments and provide direction to staff regarding specific topics requiring additional information or revision to the draft recommendations.

Report

Issue:

Consider public comments on draft Missing Middle Housing code revisions, and recommendation to develop a methodology for impact fees and general facilities charges (GFCs). What additional information is needed by the Commission to develop its recommendation to City Council on this matter? Should revisions or alternative approaches be considered?

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Presenter(s):

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Background and Analysis:

The term 'Missing Middle' refers to a range of multi-unit housing types that are compatible in scale with single-family homes. In other words, they provide 'middle' density housing. There have been relatively few of these types of housing constructed in Olympia (and nationwide) over the past 40 years compared to single-family homes - thus, they are referred to as 'missing.' Some examples of missing middle housing types include tiny houses, modular units, cottage homes, townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, small multi-family apartments, and accessory dwelling units.

The Missing Middle Housing Analysis directly implements several policies of the Olympia Comprehensive Plan, as listed on the Missing Middle web page on the City's website (Attachment 3). There are other policies in the Comprehensive Plan that also address issues directly or indirectly related to this project. The Plan calls for a balance of its goals and policies within context of the entire Plan, as stated in this excerpt from the Introduction section of the Comprehensive Plan:

At times, goals or policies may seem to be in conflict with each other. For example, a goal to increase density may seem to be in conflict with a goal to preserve open space. Or a goal to increase tree canopy may seem to be in conflict with a goal to increase solar energy access. Over the next 20 years, the complex challenges and opportunities we face as a community will often require us to strike a balance between different goals and policies to provide the best outcome for the community as a whole. Thus individual goals and policies should always be considered within the context of the entire Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Chapter discusses low-, medium- and high-density neighborhoods. Corresponding zoning districts are defined in OMC 18.59.055.C (Attachment 4). The Missing Middle analysis is focused on allowing for an appropriate variety of residential housing types in low-density neighborhoods and the corresponding zoning districts.

The Missing Middle analysis has reviewed existing city regulations - such as zoning, permit fees, development standards, utility connection charges, etc. - for potentially disproportionate effects on the ability to provide for a variety of housing types in the City's low-density, residentially zoned areas.

The Planning Commission has received numerous briefings on this project throughout 2017 and early 2018. Planning Commissioners served as chair and vice-chair of the Missing Middle Work Group that identified, examined and commented on issues related to Missing Middle housing at eight monthly meetings in 2017.

The proposed code revisions to implement the Missing Middle recommendations were included in the March 5, 2018 Planning Commission packets and are accessible on the Missing Middle web page (Attachment 1). The draft recommendation for an impact fee and GFC methodology study is included as Attachment 2. The Missing Middle web page also contains detailed information on the review process, public outreach, draft recommendations and Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) issued February 27, 2018, under the State Environmental Policy Act.

On March 20, 2018, an appeal of the DNS was filed by Olympians Opposing Missing Middle. The appeal will be considered by the Olympia Hearing Examiner at a date to be determined. Staff recommends the Planning Commission delay finalizing its recommendation on the Missing Middle draft recommendations to the City Council until the Hearing Examiner has issued a decision on this appeal.

At its last five meetings, the Planning Commission reviewed the draft Missing Middle recommendations in detail, as well as related documents and information that were reviewed by the Work Group and staff in developing the recommendations. All public comments received during the Planning Commission review have been provided to Planning Commission members. Attachment 6 includes written comments received since the March 19 public hearing through the extended written comment period, which ended 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Friday, March 23, 2018.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The Missing Middle Housing Analysis has garnered significant community and neighborhood interest. There is a large e-mail list of interested parties, and the Coalition of Neighborhood Associations has had regular briefings and discussions monthly during 2017 and 2018. Staff have provided updates and taken comment at more than twelve meetings with neighborhood associations and other organizations.

Options:

Discuss public comments and provide direction to staff regarding specific topics requiring additional information or revisions to the draft recommendations.

Financial Impact:

The Missing Middle analysis is included as part of the adopted City budget. Draft recommendations may have long-term impacts to property tax revenues and infrastructure expenditures for the City.

Potential impacts to property values in low-density neighborhoods is addressed in numerous research studies (see Attachment 5 for a list of some of this research).

Attachments:

Missing Middle web page
Impact fee and GFC study recommendation
Comprehensive Plan policies
Future Land Use designations & zoning districts
Research on impacts on property values
Written public comments